

ABANDONED BUILDING DEMOLITION PROJECT

APRIL 2000

Community Based Environmental Protection

CBEP is an innovative approach taken by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to aid in protecting human health and the environment. The intent of CBEP is to bring people who live or work in a community together to (1) identify environmental concerns at the neighborhood level; (2) establish priorities among the various participants and governmental agencies; and (3) assist residents and partners in resolving environmental issues that will improve the quality of life in their neighborhoods.

BACKGROUND

EPA sponsored a series of public meetings called The Listening Tour in the Fall of 1997. During those meetings, abandoned buildings were the second highest environmental concern listed by residents. St. Louis has an inventory of over 6,000 properties which it owns and manages because Missouri law requires the City to take title to property that is tax delinquent for more than three years.

An overwhelming number of these properties contain vacant and abandoned buildings which contribute to blight, crime, decay of neighborhoods and physical hazards to children who reside in the area. Many contain asbestos insulation, asbestos floor and ceiling tile, and lead-based paint which pose additional risks of exposure to toxic substances by the public and require special handling during building demolition.

In response to the expressed concern of St. Louis residents, EPA has initiated a pilot project and partnership to demolish 20 abandoned houses in the 3900 and 4000 block of Cook Street in the Vandeventer Neighborhood. Selected houses are currently in poor condition, some of them crumbling from neglect, all of them owned or condemned by the City.



These structures pose a physical hazard as well as a threat of release of asbestos and lead. Such materials require special handling under the federal National Emissions Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants (NESHAPS) rules, which makes demolition expensive - part of the reason the properties are in their current condition.

Our partnership intends to demonstrate inspection, hazardous material abatement and demolition techniques that are both cost effective and protective of human health and the environment. This partnership includes EPA Region 7, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), U.S. Department of

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Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Missouri Department of Natural Resources, the City of St. Louis, the St. Louis Development Corporation, the St. Louis Association of Neighborhood Organizations, the Regional Commerce and Growth Association and the East West Gateway Coordinating Council.

CURRENT ACTIVITIES

To date, a team of federal, state and city staff have conducted the environmental and structural assessments of the properties which were selected by the neighborhood association for inclusion in the pilot project. The City Building Division is in the process of awarding abatement and demolition contracts, and demolition of the first house was begun mid-March 2000.

Demolition is being paid for by the City as a result of \$11 million bond issue passed in November of 1998 by citizens of the City to support abandoned building demolition. Dollars from the bond issue can only be used for demolition contracts, not for planning and management of the project. Therefore, the City and its residents will benefit from the technical assistance of their federal and state partners.



Through this project, we seek to create a model that neighborhoods, contractors and the City can use in other locations. We also plan to achieve



NESHAPS compliance and to find cost effective, environmentally sound ways to demolish buildings so that the City can continue to address this significant urban problem.

For more information, please contact:

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